

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 004409

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [MARR](#) [PINR](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY'S SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL

1. Summary: The Supreme Military Council (Yukse Askeri Surasi - YAS) will meet August 1-4 and decide general and flag officer promotions. We provide a description of the YAS and the military promotion and assignment system as background in advance of the announcement of senior promotions and assignments which is expected NLT August 5. Most observers expect DCHOD GEN Ilker Basbug to become commander of the First Army in Istanbul, putting him in line to become CHOD in 2008. Other expected assignments include War Academies Commander Gen. Faruk Comert to become head of the Turkish Air Forces and Fleet Commander ADM Yener Karahanoglu to become head of the Turkish Naval Forces. End Summary.

The Supreme Military Council

2. The Supreme Military Council (YAS) was formed under Law No: 1612 in 1972. According to the law, the Council is to decide military promotions and "to deliver opinion" on military strategic concepts prepared by the Turkish General Staff (TGS), the main program and objectives of the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF), legislation and regulations drafted for the TAF, and other issues pertaining to the TAF that the Prime Minister, Defense Minister or Chief of TGS may raise. YAS meetings are always closed to media. The Council decides which issues are to be released to the public during each session.

3. The YAS consists of 16 members, all 14 four-star generals and admirals, the Minister of Defense and the Prime Minister. With the Prime Minister in the chair, the Council is convened two times a year, in early August and on another date determined by the Chief of TGS, to discuss promotions, assignments, and other military issues. The YAS will make decisions about promotions, extensions of time-in-rank and retirements; decisions are taken with majority votes. While the Chief of TGS will hear the views of the service chiefs about the assignments of general and flag officers in their respective services, he alone makes the final decision on senior assignments.

YAS Meetings

4. On the first day of the YAS meeting, promotions of lieutenant generals and vice admirals who have completed four years of service since their last promotion are discussed. All of the generals and admirals in the meeting are obliged to share their opinions about each individual being considered. After the completion of a grading system, the two or three persons with the highest grades are promoted. The same procedure is followed for the promotion of colonels/navy captains, brigadier generals, major generals and rear admirals.

5. The YAS also considers cases of expulsion for bad conduct. In recent years, at each meeting the YAS has decided to expel a small number of officers from the armed services for engaging in activities the military considers Islamic fundamentalist.

TAF Promotion System

6. According to the military's employment and promotion system,

-- In the Land Forces, every four years one lieutenant general is promoted to general, during each of the intervening years two lieutenant generals are promoted.

-- In the Air Force, every two years one lieutenant general is promoted to general.

-- In the Navy, every two years one vice admiral is promoted to admiral.

There is no full general position in the Jandarma; the four-star commander of the Jandarma is always a Land Forces general.

17. A second lieutenant or ensign, who graduated from one of the academies at the age of 20, can become a general or admiral after 25 years of service. In the current system of the Land Forces, one serves as a second lieutenant for three years (one year for academy graduates), a first lieutenant for 6 years, a captain for 6 years, a major for 6 years (five for staff college graduates), and a lieutenant colonel for 3 years. Promotions through the rank of colonel are routine and most officers rise to that rank. Colonels are eligible for promotion to brigadier general after six years (five for defense university graduates); if not promoted, they may serve as a colonel for a total of nine years. Two one-year time-in-rank credits are possible during a career for outstanding service. The same system applies to the Air Force and Navy.

18. General and flag serve four years before being considered for promotion to the next rank. If not promoted or extended by the YAS, or assigned as a service chief or the Chief of TGS, the officer must retire. Service chiefs are permitted an additional two years in rank; the Chief of TGS is permitted an additional four years in rank. Voluntary retirement is permitted at 55 years of age; the mandatory retirement age is 65, although it is 67 for the Chief of TGS.

19. There are 14 4-star positions: 10 in the Land Forces, 2 in the Air Force, and 2 in the Navy.

Possible Change in Promotion System

10. During the 'Public Quality Symposium' held at the Middle East Technical University on June 12, 2003, TGS/J1 (personnel) Lieutenant General Hasan Igsiz stated that, in 2005, the TAF would start implementing a 'human resources management' model basing promotions on performance level rather than service period. However, this has not yet been implemented and we understand that the target is now 2010.

General/Flag Officer Assignments

11. The Chief of TGS has full authority to assign generals and admirals other than service chiefs, although the opinion of the relevant service chief is considered. Traditionally, these officers serve two tours at each rank -- one in a staff billet, the other as a commander of forces in the field. Service chiefs are nominated by the Chief of TGS and assigned by decree upon the signature of the Minister of Defense, PM and President. Therefore, the Chief of TGS is the only person who can nominate individuals for commander positions. (Note: Under these circumstances the government can only have a significant impact on the assignment of the Chief of TGS, but not on the rest. End note.)

Chief of TGS

12. Under Turkish law, the Chief of TGS is assigned by the decision of the Council Ministers and with the approval of the President. The Chief of TGS is assigned for a period of 4 years or until he reaches the mandatory retirement age. To date, all 24 Chiefs of TGS have been from the Land Forces. Most of them were first assigned as Commander of the First Army, and then Commander of the Land Forces before becoming Chief of TGS.

Expected Senior Assignments

13. In 2006, when current Chief of TGS General Hilmi Ozkok must retire, General Yasar Buyukanit, Commander of the Land Forces, is expected to become Chief of TGS--although there are rumblings that the AKP government would prefer the popular general not get this job. Most observers believe Deputy Chief of the TGS General Ilker Basbug will become Commander of the First Army this year, the Commander of the Land Forces in 2006 and Chief of TGS in 2008. (Outspoken First Army Commander GEN Hursit Tolon is retiring this year.) Turkish Air Forces Commander Gen. Ibrahim Firtina and Naval Forces Commander ADM Ozlem Ornek must retire. They are expected to be succeeded by War Academies (the equivalent of our staff and war colleges) Gen. Faruk Comert and Fleet Commander ADM Yener Karahanoglu respectively. A frequently heard rumor is that TGS/J5 Lt.Gen. Aydogan Baboglu would be promoted and replace Gen. Comert. The names most commonly heard as possible successors to DCHOD GEN Basbug are National Military Representative to NATO LTG Ergin Saygun, Aegean Army Commander Sebahattin Isik Kosaner, Fifth Corps Commander LTG Hasan Igsiz, and (less frequently) MND U/S LTG Atila Isik.

